

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Creating a clear ethos led by student voice

How Burton Borough School created a clear ethos led by student voice

Context of our anti-bullying work

Burton Borough School is a large comprehensive of 1200 students in a town with 2 single-sex, selective grammar schools. Burton Borough sought to include all students into the development of an anti-bullying definition and an anti-bullying policy so that they would have ownership and true understanding of what it meant. We used student voice and peer support to understand the student context.

What we hoped to achieve

- To develop an anti-bullying policy that all students understood
- To develop an anti-bullying definition for the school that all students knew and understood
- To use student voice to inform the anti-bullying work in the school
- To use student voice to develop a list of unacceptable words within the school
- To use peer support to address incidents of bullying in the school
- To gain student pledges against bullying

The action we took

1. Developing a school definition of bullying: On PD Day Jan 2022, we worked with staff to develop their ideas of a BBS definition of bullying. In school assemblies on 10/1/22 we showed students this definition and the Anti-bullying Alliance definition and asked them to work together in tutor groups to produce a BBS definition of bullying. All these definitions were collated and in the assembly on 17/1/22 KST presented the different versions and the proposed definition. This definition was then given to student council who were asked to come to an SLT meeting to discuss their thoughts. They requested a change to the definition to remove the word 'pupils' and replace with 'people' so bullying of staff was also included. Once agreed by student council, the definition was placed on student notices, put on posters around school, communicated to families and governors and added to school website.
2. Developing an anti-bullying policy that all students knew and understood: Once the anti-bullying policy had been written, this was given to student council for approval and discussion between student council and SLT. Draft policies were also given to tutor groups for discussion and challenge in tutor time. Student concerns were listened to and changes made accordingly.

3. To use student voice to inform anti-bullying work in school: Student panels were completed with different groups within the school including student council, LGBTQ+ group, Students of diversity and SEND. After a student panel, students were invited to an SLT meeting to further share their views. This highlighted concerns around the use of certain slurs within school. This allowed us to work with these students to develop a list of unacceptable language. Students were also invited to take part in the Bullying Prevention Work Group that was established, alongside teachers, parents, support staff and governors. One of our students was also nominated, and chosen, to be part of the Anti-Bullying Alliance student panel.
4. Developing a list of unacceptable words: Student voice indicated that students saw a difference between slurs and profanities. They highlighted slurs that were used regularly in the school and the impact that those slurs had on them. We worked with students to agree a list of words that would not be used within the school in any context, and the consequences of their use. This list was shared with students in tutor time and in assemblies on 23/3/22 and highlighted again in assembly on 2/5/22 which supported International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.
5. To use peer support to address incidents of bullying: Peer Wellbeing mentors have been trained and allocated to each 'house'. They support students who have been affected by bullying. We are increasing the number of these students in September 2022 to one wellbeing mentor in each tutor group. We are also receiving Diana Award Ambassador training on 21st September.
6. To gain school pledges against bullying: In tutor time on 9/5/22 we asked students to make pledges against bullying. They were asked to draw around their hand and write their pledge on the palm. These are pledges are now collated in tutor rooms and there is also a large central display.

Impact and outcomes of the work

- All students aware of anti-bullying definition
- All students aware that we have an anti-bullying policy and where to find it
- All students aware of unacceptable language within school and the consequences of it's use
- Students affected by bullying have additional support through well-being mentors
- All students, in particular students of diversity, feel part of the development of the school anti-bullying policy and action plan

What we have learned

Positives: the role of student voice is essential. We learnt so much by really listening to our students and understanding their lived realities.

Points for improvement: use the wellbeing mentors more. Make them accessible to students at social time and not just by referral.